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ABSTRACT

To determine the effect of attention to affective needs on the success of adult literacy programs, researchers analyzed data from 400 programs nominated by advisors to the National Adult Literacy Project (NALP), and selected a sample of 15 for the field research. The sample programs included three military, three prison, three English as a second language, two job skills centers, one library, and one community based. At each site, program administrators, teachers, counselors, and students participated in formal and informal interviews, and program materials were reviewed to gather information on (1) counseling for academic and vocational, human development, and empowerment purposes, as well as peer support and ancillary support systems (e.g., child care); (2) staff composition and teacher attitudes and behavior; and (3) types of materials and their appropriateness for student needs, concerns, learning styles, and contexts. In general, it was found that teachers carry the main burden of counseling and other support; peer support is an important need of adult learners; ancillary supports reflect a program's values; assessment of human development and empowerment gains is difficult; and the teacher's attitude of respect for the learner's background and experience is crucial to program effectiveness. (SK)

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AFFECTIVE ASPECTS OF ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS: A LOOK AT THE TYPES OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS, TEACHER BEHAVIOR AND MATERIALS THAT CHARACTERIZE EFFECTIVE LITERACY PROGRAMS

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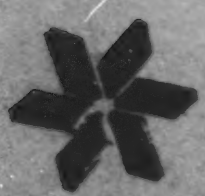

NATIONAL ADULT LITERACY PROJECT
FAR WEST LABORATORY

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PREFACE

The National Adult Literacy Project (NALP), sponsored by the National Institute of Education (NIE), is one component of the President's Initiative on Adult Literacy.

Work on NALP began in September 1983, by the Far West Laboratory (FWL) for Educational Research and Development in San Francisco, and The NETWORK, Inc., in Andover, Massachusetts. The project undertook a number of activities that would inform literacy providers of program characteristics that influence the achievement and retention of adult learners enrolled in adult literacy programs. This report on the field research conducted by NALP staff, reports some of those key characteristics.

Project staff would like to acknowledge the contributions of Dr. Betty McEady who helped develop the methodology and participated in the field testing and refinement of the data collection instruments for this field study; the staff and students of all the literacy programs who participated in the data gathering process and who so graciously provided additional information during the many informal conversations that were engaged in. We would also like to thank our Project Officer, Michael Brunner, for his suggestions and support and for his encouragement throughout this project.

Margaret Robinson
Project Director
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CHAPTER I

A LOOK AT THE TYPES OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS THAT CHARACTERIZE EFFECTIVE LITERACY PROGRAMS

It is frequently suggested in the literature that adult literacy programs are most effective when they attend to students' affective as well as cognitive needs (Bliss, 1984; Koloski, 1984; Longfield, 1984; Samuels, 1980; Freire, 1970, etc). In particular, the existence of support systems for adult learners (Deveaux, 1984; Prosen, 1983;), the presence of a staff with realistic, positive attitudes (Wallenstein, 1984) and the socio-cultural context (Samuels, 1980; Freire, 1970) are cited as key influences on student achievement and retention. One focus of the two studies described in this report was to determine how important these factors were to the successful operation of a range of outstanding literacy programs.

A second purpose was to gather more detailed information than currently exists on the types of support systems, teacher behavior and materials that characterize three major categories of literacy programs: those that view literacy training pragmatically, as a prerequisite for a diploma and a job; those that view literacy training in humanistic terms, as a crucial aspect of students' personal development, and those that view literacy training politically, as a means for improving the socio-econonmic and psychological situation of dispossessed migrants, immigrants, refugees and other low-income people. McCune, among others, states the need for more of this type of baseline information:

> There is quite simply a huge void in the descriptive data about adult literacy progams. Little is available which will tell . . . who is delivering these programs, what they do, how many are being served, how well they work . . . what unmet needs they might have. Student data are equally short in supply with regard to levels of performance rate of growth and benefits (students) derive from various instructional approaches . . . beyond the acquisition of basic literacy skills (1984).

Because student teacher relationships and other human interactions in literacy programs were the major subjects of the two studies reported here, the approach to data collection was primarily qualitative, as the methodology section that follows explains. The section on methodology also provides information on the data analysis procedures that were used, the criteria that

were employed in selecting particular literacy programs to be studied and a brief description of those programs. It should be noted that although two studies were conducted, this report combines them under one title, since the same methodology was utilized for both.

Subsequent sections of the report treat the support systems by literacy programs, teacher attitudes and behavior and materials separately, and the findings are reported together.

A. Methodology

1. Background

Much of the recent literature points out that student motivation and academic achievement are highest where interactions between staff and student are learner-centered as opposed to program-centered (Deveaux, 1984; Darling, 1981; Wilson, 1980). More specifically, a number of researchers discuss the need for support for students that include highly responsive and capable teachers, counselors and peers (Longfield, 1984; Prosen, 1983; James, 1981; and Mocker, 1980). As Longfield stated:

> The past educational experiences of illiterate adults may be so negative or irrelevant that they . . . have a poor self-image and lack self-confidence. They may have a negative attitude. . . toward school and figures of authority . . . functionally illiterate adults need the warmth and understanding of an enlightened teacher who will set the learner at ease, emphasize the positive, be patient and understanding, and set educational objectives around the students' needs and potential (1984).

Bliss adds that the migrants, refugees and immigrants served by English-as-a-second-language (ESL) literacy programs are particularly in need of support.

> An especially critical service that is lacking nationwide for refugees and immigrants is adequate native-language counseling support to help newcomers deal with post-trauma stress resulting from painful family separations, incidents of boat piracy and rape, the witnessing of executions of family members, survivor guilt, and the shock, stress and depression of leaving one's homeland and entering an alien culture. Teachers often report that while their refugee students are physically present in class, their minds are

so consumed by unresolved conflicts and stresses that learning is negligible" (Bliss, 1984).

Similarly, a number of other sources (Patterson and Pulling; Prosen, 1983) recommend that support services be offered all literacy students, ranging from orientation to ongoing educational counseling to exit and follow-up assistance.

Other researchers stress that "staff, both salaried and volunteer, are a key element in adult literacy programs (Newman, n.d.), since in many programs, teachers are not only required to provide instruction, but to help recruit students, offer counseling, develop adult education curricula, help evaluate their projects, conduct inservice teacher training and provide vocational counseling (Delker, 1984). In accordance with the amount of influence teachers may have on student achievement and retention, a number of sources suggest the importance of achieving as much congruity as possible between students' socio-economic/cultural context and staff composition, materials and program goals (Kreitlow, 1981; McCullough, 1981). Research also stresses the desirability of instruction that takes into account the needs, interests and abilities of the individual learner (Boraks and Schumacher, 1981). Yet another key factor that emerges from the literature is active learner involvement in goal setting and the choice of assessment and learning materials (James, 1981; Wallerstein, 1984).

2. The Approach

The complexity and interrelatedness of these factors dictated that each of the programs in the study be looked at in its entirety. As stated earlier, a primarily qualitative approach was decided upon, in which structured interviews and informal conversations were conducted on-site with the students and staff of each literacy program. Classroom and staff room observations and materials analysis supplemented these data.

3. Criteria for Program Selection

The literacy programs that were studied were chosen from 400 projects nominated by advisors to the National Adult Literacy Project (NALP), whose staff authored the study reported here. Other experts in the field of adult literacy were also consulted for suggestions.

The 400 original nominees were selected because of their strengths in the following areas:

- o student recruitment
- o diagnostic testing and other learner assessment
- o student orientation and counseling
- o teaching methods
- o instructional materials
- o program evaluation
- o student retention
- o student follow-up

These programs were surveyed, using a questionnaire that had been developed to identify promising practices in the field of literacy. Data from the returned questionnaires and materials received from the programs surveyed were then assessed according to a point system based on such measures of success as numbers of Geneal Education Diploma (GED) tests administered and passed; increases in students' achievement test scores in math and reading; numbers of students who go on for further schooling, obtain employment or advance in their jobs; excellent evaluations by State Departments of Education; students' satisfaction with the program, as demonstrated by word-of-mouth advertising that brings in large numbers of new recruits; student reports of increased skills and self-esteem; low staff turnover; support from local businesses and agencies, among other indicators of success.

From the 32 programs that received the highest ratings, 15 sites were selected that represented a geographic, programmatic and institutional range of literacy projects for the field research.

4. Description of Sites

The programs that participated in the study included:

- o two military literacy programs, located in the west.

One focused on improving the basic skills of recruits to enable them to succeed in basic training; the other had as its goals improving enrollees' academic skills to enhance their career mobility in the military. These programs served a predominately male population and employed both civilian and military teachers.

- three prison programs, two of which were located in the midwest and one of which was located in an eastern state.

These programs provided basic skills training, GED and/or high school diploma courses. One of the programs included classes for people with very low literacy skills (i.e., 0-3).

- three school-based English-as-a-second-language (ESL) sites, two of which were located in the west and one in the east.

The western sites primarily served southeast Asian refugees, although other groups also participated in their programs. The eastern site delivered ESL services primarily to middle and upper-class spouses of foreign business and military personnel.

- three school-based Adult Basic Education ABE) sites, one of which was located in the east and two in the midwest.

These programs were affiliated with the local school or community college district, and each offered a wide range of services, including ABE, GED and/or high school diploma programs. The population these programs served was primarily white, although some minority students were also enrolled.

- two sites whose major emphasis was on job skills development and job placement, one of which was located in the west and one in the east.

These sites primarily served a racially and ethnically-mixed group of young men and women from low-income backgrounds.

- one program that operated through the local library system and offered tutoring in a wide range of literacy skills.

Located in the west, this program was directed toward students who represented a wide range of ethnic and economic backgrounds.

- one community-based program, located in the east, that provided a broad array of literacy skill classes and community services. It primarily served low-income white and minority women.

5. Site Data Collection Procedures

At each of these sites, program administrators, teachers, counselors and students were interviewed by the field researcher assigned to that site. Only one program did not make students available for interviews. Generally, the formal interviews

were held over a two-day period, supplemented by informal conversations with as many staff members and students as possible.

The formal interviews were conducted according to the instructions included in a field inquiry guide that had been piloted at sites on the east and west coasts prior to its use in the field. The guide specified the questions that were to be posed to administrators, counselors, teachers and students. Questions probed the degree to which students were encouraged to participate actively in the choice of curriculum, materials and assessment; the extent to which support systems had been established, in the form of counseling, peer tutoring, educational referrals, networking and other services; and the relevance of program materials and objectives to students' sociocultural and economic background and goals. Informal, unstructured interviews and observations were intended to gather similar types of information about teachers' perceptions of and fulfillment of students' affective needs; program and teacher expectations for and assumptions about students; and the relationship between program goals, student goals, and program materials, methods and assessments. Finally, program materials were reviewed and descriptions of the materials were added to the program summary sheet that was prepared for each of the sites in the study. Thus, the data that were gathered provided information on each program in the following areas:

- o support systems, including the existence of
  - counseling for academic progress
  - non-academic counseling
  - peer support
  - involvement of significant others
  - ancillary services
- o staff composition and teacher attitudes and behavior, including the existence of
  - a staff that reflected the make-up of the surrounding community
  - collaborative planning that enabled learners to make choices in curriculum objectives and content
  - continuous appraisal, feedback and adaptation of instruction to a student's needs and skill levels
  - teacher sensitivity to and skills in success/failure management

- high expectations for learners' success
- provision of multiple opportunities for student self-assessment and validation of learning
- committed, caring, competent teachers who responded to individual needs and capabilities
- high engaging activities
- a performance-based rather than a time-based curriculum
- provision for sequential steps that resulted in student success and short-term, sequential goals
- staff maintenance of the confidentiality of student records

o types of materials used and other relevant information such as

- the degree to which curriculum objectives and content were practical, concrete and explicit
- the existence of materials that assessed individual needs and capabilities
- the degree to which materials were geared to immediate adult concerns
- the degree to which outcomes and skills learned from materials were applicable to students' economic, political and social context
- the congruity between learners' cognitive styles and instructional methods

6. Data Analysis

Data from the summary sheets were then coded and a cross-site analysis was performed (cf. Miles and Huberman, 1984), so that learner support activities at each site could be categorized, coded and matched to program goals. A master list of teacher affective behaviors was compiled so that the numbers and kinds of behavoir that characterized each site could be discerned. Materials, methods and assessment activities were also categorized coded and matched to program goals. The patterns that emerged are discussed in the following sections.

B. Support Systems

A wide spectrum of human support systems were evident in the programs studied. They included personal, academic and vocational counseling; various kinds of peer support; and ancillary supports, such as child care. These types of support systems were common to all programs; differences in the kinds of support offered were related to differences in program goals.

The goals evinced by the projects in the study fell into three major categories, as previously stated. One group of programs tended to define goals for their students in academic or job-skill terms and viewed student success primarily in those terms. They often set students' objectives for them and assumed that the program staff knew what was best for the student. A second group of programs saw their goals in terms of human development, which they defined as encompassing much more than simply assisting students to improve their academic skills or employability. These programs allowed students to define their own literacy needs and objectives in relation to a wide range of personal goals. Their assumption was that the student knows best what he or she needs. A third group of programs viewed literacy goals for students as including not only academic and personal objectives, but also social and political empowerment. These programs taught literacy on the assumption that students should be able to define their own literacy needs and use their increased skills to gain more control over all aspects of their lives.

1. Counseling

Although, as stated previously, all three types of programs provided academic and vocational counseling of some type, and all relied on teachers to perform many of the day-to-day counseling tasks, counseling varied according to program goals and assumptions about students.

a. Programs Emphasizing Academic and Job Skills

The academic and jobs-skills-oriented programs took a "you can do it" approach to counseling. Morale boosting and "cheerleading" were frequent. As one student reported: "they try to keep you in a good mood; they have confidence; and they let you know that; they make it as easy on you as they can." With these programs, the emphasis was on promoting academic success through patient instruction and positive reinforcement. A student commented: "if you ask the same question 100 times they don't mind." And a teacher corroborated the need for establishing an atmosphere of trust:

It's important for the student to feel success. We meet the student where their ability is or a bit lower to foster success so that they find out they know the answer or part of the answer.

While teachers in these academic and job-oriented programs also offered a sympathetic ear to students' personal problems, counseling was generally academically focused and took the form of conveying rules, expectations and goals, feedback on student performance or educational advice. Most counseling, of whatever type, was done on an individual basis.

The military literacy programs typically told their students what their goals should be. Literacy skills were to be acquired so that students could complete basic training or advance in their careers. Students were told what and how they would study and the consequences of failure. In one program, they were assigned extra study hours if their academic progress was not up to standard. Daily feedack was offered to students and for those who were failing, counseling sessions were set up to determine the cause of failure and to offer any needed academic or personal support so that the problem could be overcome.

Students in the prison literacy programs were given the opportunity to set their own goals but most often, the opportunity could not be acted upon because completion of a GED or high school diploma program was frequently a condition of parole. Counseling in these programs tended to focus on realistic goals and time frames. For example, when one prisoner who had been convicted on drug charges expressed a desire to become a nurse, he was counseled to consider options that would not be closed off to him because of his criminal record.

The school-based literacy programs also concentrated on directing students toward attainment of the GED or high school diploma as their major goal. Students did not really participate in decisions about what they would learn, but were tested, were told what they needed and told what classes to take to meet their needs. As one teacher said, "we are in business to help people find themselves in a better position than they're in now." In the school-based literacy programs, students were also counseled in "self-direction techniques" and "efficient methods of learning."

In general, then, the counseling offered by the job-oriented literacy programs emphasized preparing for, finding and keeping employment and acquiring the appropriate skills for accomplishing these goals. Students were told the rules for participating in the program, which included adhering to a strict

attendance schedule, and were placed in a set curriculum according to their needs and ability. They were required to match their goals to the program's goals; if they did not want a competency-based program whose end goal was the GED, a high school diploma or career advancement, they were counseled to try another educational program.

Although succeeding in academic terms was the primary emphasis in the counseling offered by all the job-oriented programs, people enrolled in the literacy programs operated by the military or prisons also had access to such institutional counselors as the chaplain, or, in the case of prisoners, a correctional counselor. Prisoners were also offered Alcoholics Anonymous(AA) and drug counseling and other types of personal counseling programs.

The school-based programs, on the other hand, made no provisions for personal counseling, but referred students who needed such services to outside agencies. Indeed, a key counseling skill in all programs seemed to be the ability to put students in touch with needed services that the program could not provide. In one prison, for example, the administrator, who had extensive personal contacts and a thorough knowledge of local educational resources, was able to arrange for students to be placed in appropriate educational programs after their release. In other prisons, counselors stated the need for developing more contacts with outside agencies so that they would have continuing educational resources to offer prisoners about to be released.

Although all but one of the military and prison literacy programs did not provide vocational counseling as an adjunct to educational programs, employment counseling was part of the educational process in the other job-skills-oriented programs. In these programs, occupational information was delivered during job seminars and in some cases, students were able to role-play job search and interview techniques. One prison program did offer a career exploration course and job seeking classes, as well as individual vocational counseling, on an informal basis.

b. Programs Emphasizing Human Development Goals

In literacy programs that emphasized the development of the whole person, students' personal problems and issues were considered to be as important as employment and academic issues. One counselor explained: (With) a lot of the students who come in for educational counseling, (personal) problems come out. . . so usually by the second session. . . I deal with it". A teacher stated: "We are concerned not just with helping them become successfully employed but with the whole adult life role."

Much of the counseling that was offered in programs with the human development philosophy consisted of one-on-one conversations between the teacher and student in which each imparted information about his or her daily life. Teachers often explained that they kept abreast of what was happening with their students by asking questions and listening carefully and non-judgementally. Many mentioned that the ability to be non-judgemental was a key counseling skill, as was sensitivity to student's class, culture, and gender. As one teacher said: "you have to understand where the student is coming from and that middle class values don't always apply." Another emphasized that establishing a feeling of mutual exchange with the students was important: ". . . the bonding process is what keeps people coming back . . . it's a friendship feeling. . . . You have to be emphathetic and have good communication skills."

The programs with a human development focus tended to assume that students already knew what they wanted and needed to learn. Educational counseling usually involved helping the learner define their own goals, whether or not they related to obtaining formal academic credentials or job skills. The teaching personnel in these programs stressed that many of the adults who enrolled in literacy classes had a history of problems with academia and needs that had not been fulfilled. Thus, whether a student had entered the program because he or she wanted to apply for citizenship or get a driver's license, the teacher/counselors felt that their role should be to assist each learner in reaching his or her self-defined goal. One teacher commented:

> We strongly feel that you can help your adult (student) make choices . . . but if they choose something that does not agree with you, you must follow that student's choice. You cannot continue to make choices for these students because the problem with this group of people is that so many times choices are being made for them without their their control and that's why they are on welfare and other things.

The human development-oriented programs that offer ESL do not allow students quite this much leeway, since classes are organized to teach different levels of English language instruction and students are usually placed into the level that matches their skills. However, in most of these programs, learners may request level changes. And in one program, in particular, every effort is made to first assess student needs, then match instruction to those needs, whether the latter include ordinary coping skills or academic assistance. One administrator stressed that his program was run with "very open communication. If a student says, "I want to go to a higher class and talks with the teacher, they go to a higher class . . . they are adults . . .

they can make decisions." Another administrator reported that his program had changed in recent years in the direction of being much more responsive to the self-defined needs of students. In this program, a student's needs were assessed before he or she began classes and instruction was then tailored to the student, who could enroll in one of the three ESL tracks: "survival" courses, academic and prevocational.

Although some programs relied heavily on teachers to perform this initial needs assessment and diagnosis of students, in addition to providing day-to-day counseling, other human-development-oriented programs retained professional counselors to provide this and other services. One director commented that the counselor they had hired to do placement got in the way of teacher-student rapport and that teachers in her program now provided all counseling, aided by a college counseling and career center. But other program personnel stated that a professional counselor was almost indispensible. "The counselor we have does referrals, teaches parenting skills, tells teachers about students' backgrounds and helps people solve their life problems so that they can remain in the program," one teacher said, adding that "being able to have a professional counselor to deliver these services is ideal."

In the human-development-oriented programs, as in the job-oriented programs, counseling sessions were often occasions for referring students to community agencies that could help them with problems beyond the scope of the literacy classes. Thus, staff in these key programs also saw the ability to make appropriate referrals as a key counseling skill. Although few of the personal development programs, with the exception of ESL programs, emphasized vocational counseling, most did refer students to career counselors in outside agencies. The ESL programs did have job counselors, but in some cases they were stymied because they were not familiar with students' native languages and had to wait until students learned enough English to overcome language barriers.

c. Programs Emphasizing Empowerment

The programs that focused on social and political empowerment for their students had a somewhat different approach to counseling than the programs discussed above. Although the staff of these progams felt that listening to students' problems, helping them develop personally and assisting them in gaining academic and/or job skills are valuable aspects of counseling for empowerment, counselors see students' needs as not only personal or educational, but as much larger in scope. In this approach, which was influenced by the ideas and methods of Brazilian literacy educator Paulo Freire, learners are encouraged to define their own literacy needs and choose ways to

meet them that result in their taking greater control over their learning and their lives.

In the programs in the study that were oriented toward this type of student empowerment, one-to-one counseling did take place, but much of the counseling occurred within a group format. Counseling and teaching became interwoven, as student's concerns were discussed in classes and tutoring sessions and students were encouraged to name, analyze and develop strategies for dealing with their own problems. At the same time, these issues or concerns became the raw materials for learning--the basis on which reading, writing, computing and thinking skills were developed. In explaining this process, one teacher commented:

> I started doing the counseling activity in my class that was at the very lowest literacy level because my students were so caught up in their problems that they couldn't learn. They really were't available and I was frustrated about it.

This teacher decided to use the class sessions to discuss and read about issues that the students regarded as pressing and found that the problem of student disengagement quickly disappeared.

Another teacher confirmed the efficacy of relating the skills acquired in class to students' more general concerns:

> The same processes they use in reading comprehension need to be applied to their lives. (Material) should be academic and consciousness-raising to enable them to bring about constructive change in their lives. Because we are working in the type of community we are--working class, minorities, poor--they need change . . . I'm not pushing any political ideology . . . but my purpose is to show them how to take an academic process and apply it to their lives at a personal level . . . . I take information they give me and show the relationship it has to their family setting, to the community, then to the larger society.

Among the issues staffs who worked for the empowerment programs reported exploring were racial discrimination, poverty, the difficulties women were experiencing in finding child care so that they could work, the culture shock that new immigrants and migrants were facing and the generation gap. One counselor explained that these or other issues, such as marital or family problems would be presented within a group counseling or classroom situation. Or, the teacher/counselor might use a graphic picture or story to elicit a response from students who appeared to be concerned with a

particular problem. "Almost all the counseling is done within this kind of group situation, where you talk about a problem or present a picture and ask: "Have you ever had a similar problem? What did you do about it?" According to this counselor:

> The group works very hard to assemble a list of resources and to figure out what is needed to solve the problem. And the teacher might chime in with something the group hadn't thought about, but it would look like the group was pooling its resources and solving the problem. Then the counselor becomes a teacher and starts teaching some vocabulary. But that's what you would see. The group working together to find the answer to a problem.

As in the human-development-oriented programs, non-judgmental listening was regarded as a key counseling skill. But in addition to listening, teachers and counselors also stated that they needed to know how to help students define their concerns, represent those concerns through writing, role-playing or other means, and develop an understanding of how the concerns brought up in class related to their own personal lives, to students' lives and to the larger society. This type of counseling support thus went beyond empathy, or the ability to help students with referrals, to skill at teaching students problem-solving that would enabel them to develop the ability to counsel themselves and each other, analyze their concerns in both personal and social contexts and take action.

In addition to this form of counseling support, teachers in the empowerment programs also did individual counseling that focused on students' personal development. The programs also had at least one professional counselor who ran counseling groups and was available for more in-depth personal and vocational counseling. In the vocational counseling that was offered, job skills were not seen as ends in themselves but as integral to the process of empowerment. In one of the empowerment-oriented programs, job information was thus part of the curriculum materials used for literacy training; in another, a thorough job search program was offered, in which students who had a GED could sign up to learn how to write their resume, explore various careers and their own interests, develop strategies that would allow them to reach their goals and find training programs or further education.

2. Peer Support

Another type of support system offered by the literacy programs included in the study was the personal and academic assistance students often provided each other. While this peer sup-

port was only occasionally deliberately planned, and more often encouraged after it happend spontaneously, the fact that its existence characterizes almost all the exemplary programs studied suggests that it is an important factor in these programs' success.

In the military literacy programs, peer support was not only planned, but institutionalized, in the form of a "buddy system," in which students were encouraged to help each other with classwork. The staff inteviewed stated that this approach was essential to student achievement.

Peer support in the prison programs, on the other hand, was not deliberately fostered, but it did occur spontaneously in apparent response to student need. In one program, prisoners who were literate suggested that the prison set up educational services for their peers who could not read through the Laubach Literacy Council. Inmate tutors were selected from the prison population and trained, and inmates now run the whole program. The tutors who were interviewed for the study described the peer support they offer their students as an experience in which they "enjoy each others' presence." The students were more direct in their evaluation of their need for peer support. As one student commented: "We can relate . . . better with the (prison) residents (as teachers) because we are residents (too) and build a tight bond."

In addition to these more formally instituted programs of peer support, prison literacy students mentioned that their cellmates and sometimes their classmates helped them with their studies. A student who was interviewed said:

> One friend helps me. He pronounces words for me and records them on tape. He's really happy for me when I do good. He's always encouraging me. He gives me cigarettes when I do good. I was really surprised about that. Another student mentioned that her friends kept telling her to stay in the program even when she wanted to quit. She and other students clearly saw peer support as crucial to their success in school.

Where prisoners were used as aides in classrooms, they offered an additional type of peer support. A teacher stated: "Offender aides can approach students in a way we can't. They carry over our message of "you can do it," because their experiences are similar to the students and they've been able to do it."

Other programs deliberately used group instruction at least part of the time to meet students' need for social support. Staff from these programs reported that the group format not

only allowed students to answer some of each other's psycho-emotional needs, but also provided academic benefits, confirming the observation of Deveaux:

> Group instruction allows teachers to individualize their (teaching) for it allows the teacher to pull a student from a group and work individually . . . while the group plows on. Most educators agree that when there are fifteen or so students in a class, one of these students can often explain a concept or clear up a question of another student more easily than the teacher . . . group pooling of individual skills to solve problems and the emergence of a group energy and commitment are (other advantages of setting up a classroom to enhance peer support). (1984).

Several other programs planned opportunities for peer support even when instruction usually occurred on a one-to-one basis. Despite the individualized tutoring, students were encouraged to work together. In one program, the teacher tried to match students whose backgrounds were similar, so that a man who was a three-year member of AAA worked with a teenager with a drug problem.

Peer support was also a strong feature of the ESL programs. As one student commented: "When I go to school, I make friends. I feel better and my life is happy ." A teacher added later: "We are like a family. We became . . . important . . . not just for the education, but (because of the) sense of belonging somewhere . . . (for students coming to a very big country and finding a place for themselves . . . it's very hard.

The ESL sites and other programs reported that people were more willing to participate and remain in the program when they were matched with tutors of the same ethnic and/or class background. Some of the ESL programs used people who had completed their classes as translators, tutors and counselors for students from their own ethnic backgrounds. At one community-based program, there was a dramatic increase in the use of the site as a learning center and a library when people from the neighborhood who shared the same ethnic background as potential students were hired as paid tutors.

Peer support was also deliberately arranged as an integral aspect of learning by the literacy programs that subscribed to an empowerment philosophy. These programs used aides and teachers who shared similar ethnic and class backgrounds with their students. They also had developed curricula that was grounded in former and current students' experiences. Examples included units on "culture shock" for ESL

students and on oral history for poor third world and white women. Individual peer support seemed to occur naturally in a context where students' personal and socio-political situations became classroom material. As one student said:

> If a person don't get it, another person will jump up and go over and sit beside them and go step by step with them. Nobody sits still . . . once you find out you learned something you feel important, so you're going to get up and show it to somebody else . . . everybody basically helps each other. It's like a family group. Everybody sticks together.

3. Ancillary Support Systems .

Child care was the most frequently mentioned ancillary support. Five of the programs sampled made some provision for this service and those that offered it were adamant about the need for it, confirming Knox"s (1980) observation that participation in adult education programs by women under 35 is substantially lower than is for men because of the demands of motherhood. In one survey, Knox reported, "three-quarters of the mothers under 35 said that arrangements for child care would make a difference" in their ability to enroll in educational programs. The empowerment-oriented programs were most adamant for the need for providing it.

As one administrator interviewed for the NALP study added: "child care is absolutely essential if you're including women in significant numbers--especially poor, working class women who don't have money for babysitters." This administrator pointed out that if the problem of transgenerational illiteracy was to be dealt with, child care had to be more than a babysitting service:

> You need to do something for the kids . . . you need a structured program. We are trying to encourage the children not to repeat the same things their parents did . . . . We've got to push reading skills in a child-centered manner.

In further corroborating the need for child care as an integral support system in any literacy program that served women, another administrator pointed out that child care was not only critical for logistical reasons, but also made a statement to the family that the program was not going to inflict any hardships or force the family to make unnecessary changes: "(Child care) is critical because you're saying to the family, which already may not want the woman to go to school and change, that we're not forcing them to make changes."

The programs in the study that offered child care also offered other supportive services, such as assistance with transportation, food, housing and clothing for the job interviews. One program that did not provide child care enabled their students to obtain free babysitting services. This program also provided help with transportation to school.

CHAPTER II

TEACHER BEHAVIOR AND ATTITUDES OF EFFECTIVE LITERACY PROGRAMS

Teachers who "calmly accept the fact that adult learners have a complex set of academic and psychological problems and needs" and realize that the support they offer often makes the difference between student success and failure" are regarded as a sine qua non of effective literacy programs, according to program directors, teachers and students interviewed for the NALP study.

A. Teacher Behavior and Attitudes

In general, teachers who attended to their students' emotional or affective needs at the same time that they provided instruction were viewed as a key element in literacy training. As one program director said:

> The teachers need to quickly and solidly show young people--who have almost never had a teacher who cared about them--that they do care.

Another director commented that he hired teachers "who are more interested in teaching people than in teaching a particular subject." Several students confirmed that their teachers were willing to spend as much time with each student as needed. As a recruit in a military literacy program said: "The teachers are great. They find time for everybody. They . . . answer your questions and go over the material until you get it." Another student commented: "The teachers don't yell at you; they explain things; they try to keep you in the mood. They have confidence (in you) and they let you know it."

The specific teacher behavior traits most frequently mentioned by interviewees included:

- class/culture/gender sensitivity
- willingness to praise, offer postive encouragement, and emphasize students/ strengths
- ability to demonstrate high expectations
- counseling skills, including personal, academic and vocational counseling
- communication skills, ability to convey caring
- patience, flexibility, sense of humor, respect for stu-

dents, friendliness, dedication, helpfulness

- creativity and skill at establishing a relaxed, safe, trusting classroom environment

Programs were ranked according to the prevalence of these affective behaviors, using the interview and observation data that were collected. The programs that ranked highest in teacher affective behavior were those that had a student empowerment philosophy. Programs that emphasized human development as the key goal of literacy training ranked from medium to high in affective behaviors and those that were job-academic skill oriented ranked lowest. However, only one program ranked very low. Thus, the tendencey of the programs in the study was to view supportive teachers as a critical element in student achievement and retention. The major differences among the three categories of programs were that the jobs-oriented and human-development-oriented programs tended to view students as passive, helpless people or societal victims in need of acquiring competence in various areas, whereas the empowerment-oriented programs had higher levels of expectations for participants. These programs assumed that students were able to determine their own goals and could relate to teachers as facilitators who could assist them in reaching their goals.

Staff of the empowerment-oriented programs were most specific about the types of teacher attitudes that they regarded as being key factors in programmatic success. These included an attitude of emphasizing students' strengths rather than weaknesses; belief in students' ability to succeed and high expectations for success; respect for students and treatment of students as adults. These programs were also characterized by directors who emphasized the importance of staff development and training and a program philosophy that stressed class, culture and gender sensitivity.

It is important to note, however, that all but two programs in the study evinced the need for "class/cultural/gender sensitivity." The aspects of cultural or class sensitivity most often mentioned in the NALP study as being important were personal sensitivity on the part of teachers to students'varied backgrounds; explicit discussions in the classroom of race, gender and class issues; an explicit curriculum; the provision of child care to encourage more women to enroll in literacy programs; attempts to match students to teachers of the same ethnic, linguistic and cultural background; use of former literacy students or teachers of similar backgrounds to students as role models; the use of students' life experiences as vehicles for literacy training and the provision of parenting classes.

The programs studied varied, however, in their application of "class/cultural/gender sensitivity." The seven programs that stressed job skills as the goal of literacy regarded sensitivity

to students as a survival measure for the staff--a body of information that enabled them to cope, as teachers, with learners from another culture. As one teacher commented:

> It's really a cultrual shock (for teachers) who come from upper middle class white backgrounds to . . . deal with rural uneducated whites or inner-city blacks. A lot of school teachers are very naive . . . they get burnt a lot here . . . it takes a certain amount of toughness (to deal with the differences.)

Programs that were oriented toward human development goals tended to view "class/cltural/gender sensitivity" as an attitude that went hand in hand with a perspective on adult illiterates as victims of inequitable opportunity who needed to solve personal/social problems. These programs had as part of their ongoing activities explicit discussions about daily issues in students' lives where the outcome was influenced by a students background. Thus, one teacher told a story about a young Iranian woman who had not been hired by a potential employer "because she used Iranian job interview techniques rather than American ones." Another teacher commented:

> So many things come up that require knowledge of other cultures. For example I had a report from the nursery about a (Cambodian) child being abused. The child had marks on her body. But I checked . . . my notes . . . and remembered that in Cambodia, parents rub out fever, and this was actually the cause of the marks on (this) child.

Programs with empowerment philosophies, on the other hand, tended to employ people who came from the same backgrounds as the students. Thus, teachers gave constant formal and informal attention to students' personal and socio-political situations, with a view to ensuring that students' remain in the program and attain their goals. "Class/cultural/gender sensitivity" was more integrated into the total operation of the empowerment-oriented programs than it was in the other types of literacy programs. As one teacher in an empowerment-oriented program said:

> My background is very low income; I am a single parent. My daughter has three children; she is a single parent. I quit school in 10th grade and went back and got my GED and then went on to Temple (University). That gives me an advantage . . . I can really relate . . . I have been able to find ways of motivating students who would have ordinarily dropped out because I can share my experience. I know the turmoils, I know the problems of trying to raise a family, so I can relate to them better.

Another teacher observed:

We deal with racism . . . and stereotypes . . . when you get different groups together, there are stereotypes they have grown up with. We try to break down those barriers. We deal with (the myths) . . . associated with various groups and let them see that . . . you believe (the stereotype) until you know the individual . . . you see that just as the stereotypes you have about them are misleading, the ones they have about you (are too). There's a lot of exchange that goes on.

B. Materials

1. Testing Materials

Just as literacy programs' assumptions about learners dictated certain behaviors on the part of teachers, so too did these assumptions influence the types of materials used by programs. Thus, in the jobs-oriented programs, teachers, utilized standardized testing materials to assess and diagnose students' progress and choose teaching methodologies. In these programs, students had little or no involvement in their own placement or in the development of their educational goals.

In programs that focused on human development, testing was considered less important. It was used primarily to determine where students should be placed, to document their progress for funding purposes or for diagnosing instructional needs. In the latter case, testing procedures were adapted to meet individual students' needs for particular kinds of information.

In the programs with empowerment philosophies, testing was not considered important by directors or teachers, although it was used for placement for collecting statistics that funding sources required. As one teacher expressed the attitude of the empowerment-oriented programs: "Nobody knows (students') marks. I don't mark anything. I don't have a roll book. (I tell students), this is your learning process. You need to take control of it." Another teacher explained that the program used a diagnostician, but "the real truth is that the test she gives puts the student in a ballpark. (Then it's up to) the teacher to explore the ballpark."

2. Curriculum Materials

Program philosophies heavily influenced the use of teaching materials, just as the same philosophies had determined attitudes toward testing and diagnosis. Thus, the skills-oriented programs tended to use commercially-developed, prescriptive curricula keyed toward helping students attain particular competencies. When teachers relied on these materials, they adhered

closely to the recommended instructions. In four of the programs, however, the standardized materials were supplemented with teacher made materials and three of the programs varied the use of these materials to meet learners' needs.

Four of the six programs that focused on human development utilized a variety of materials and teaching methods and two--both of them, ESL programs--used commercially-developed materials. Several of these programs encouraged students to participate in the development of instructional materials and classroom methodologies.

The programs emphasizing empowerment varied their use of materials and methods according to the student population being served. Teachers systematically developed materials utilizing student input and also encouraged students to bring up subjects that concerned them for classroom discussion. Students were also invited to lead classroom activities or teach. As one teacher described her techniques for involving students in decisions about the curriculum:

> I will ask students to look at the news, or for those who have some reading skills, to look for an article in the newspaper that catches their attention and to bring it to class. I . . . either read the article to them or have them give me their interpretation of it, then allow them to rewrite it in their own words. Then I teach those same concepts. I've also used some traditional materials and worked with charts from the Laubach literacy materials . . . I ask students to develop their own stories, then pick topics of interest and have a discussion with them . . . on a theme such as employment, for example . . . having each student build on the previous statement . . . so that each has made a contribution to a short story.

Another teacher commented:

> If I have a student who had grasped a concept really well and the others are still having problems with that particular concept . . . I will let them (students) come up and do that lesson. This is important because it builds confidence. Let's them know we are all equal here. Because I am here doesn't mean they can't get up here too. It gives them a good positive feeling. Most of the students come with negative self-images because of the fact that they cannot read. It lets them know I can do something successful, I can help others, I can contribute . I'm not that dumb after all if I can stand up and teach this class.

In the view of the program directors, teachers and students

interviewed during the NALP study, such teaching methods took precedence over the materials that were used in establishing a climate in which adult learners could feel comfortable, and acquire new information and skills. A student form one program that was dealing with adult students reading at the 0-3 grade level observed:

> This place is nice . . . I can express myself, I can sit down and talk to people without them getting all stuck up, nose up in the air. No matter what color they are, because they are all different colors here, just seems like they are one family together.

A teacher in the same program stated:

> We present . . . alternatives here they can take to apply to their lives. If I have a lesson planned and the students come in with an issue they want to discuss or one student . . . comes in with a problem, I deal with it then and there. . . . I draw them out, talk to them and sometimes we share it with the class and get feedback. So it is a classroom plus it is a support system. All those things go on in my classroom and all are important--materials, teaching methods, and the tone of respect for the life experiences of the adult who learns here.

FINDINGS

1. Counseling and Other Support Systems

In general, it can be said that in the programs studied, counseling and peer support were important for retention and achievement. However, the human support systems that characterized the exemplary adult literacy programs in this study varied according to program goals and assumptions. As we have seen in the study, jobs-skill and academic-oriented programs minimized their involvement in the personal development of the student. In these programs, support systems took the form of staff encouraging students to strive for academic success; in some cases, peer support systems were also set up to serve the same goal. Because the staff in these programs saw themselves as experts who were in a better position than students to determine students' needs, decide on their goals and tell them what to do to reach those goals, support was directed at ameliorating students' deficiencies and helping program participants obtain educational credentials, a job or a job promotion.

Human development programs, on the other hand, were concerned with the student's self-esteem and life problems as well

as their academic or vocational accomplishments. Since these programs tended to view students as victims of society with problems that impeded their learning, the program staff often had a missionary spirit and sought to "save" students from their problems. Support systems were thus directed at helping students; student were not seen as capable of helping themselves.

Empowerment programs were far more concerned than other types of programs with developing students' ability to take control over their learning and their personal and social reality. In these programs, students were not told to gain a diploma, a better-paying job or otherwise subscribe to prevalent definitions of success. It was assumed that they knew their own needs and could use their newly-learned skills for purposes they themselves defined. Support systems in these programs were thus aimed at showing students how they could use their improved literacy skills to transform their own circumstances.

No matter what philosophy a program espoused, however, teachers carried the main burden of providing counseling and other support. This finding underscores the necessity for not leaving teachers' counseling skills to chance. The study reported here pointed to a number of specific skills that would be useful for the literacy staff of various types of programs. In programs that seek to motivate their students toward academic or vocational success, the following skills were most frequently mentioned:

- o the ability to convey a positive attitude about the student's chances for success
- o the ability to convey and enforce program rules and expectations
- o the ability to provide positive yet realistic feedback on performance
- o knowledge of resources available to students who need to be referred to other educational programs or for personal counseling

In the human development programs, the need for the counseling skills mentioned above was emphasized, but some additional skills were often cited as being crucial to student retention and achievement:

- o the ability to listen emphathetically
- o the ability to help students set realistic personal goals that will assist them in increasing their self-confidence

and social and communication skills.

Staff of the empowerment programs also stressed the need for teacher/counselors to know how to analyze and take action on group concerns. Skill at developing teaching/counseling curricula that focused on topics of concern to students (e.g., finding housing, culture shock, etc.) was considered particularly valuable.

Peer support stands out as another important need of adult literacy programs. This type of support seemed to be most easily developed when the program staff thought it would be a significant factor in increasing skills achievement, as in the military's "buddy system;" or when program staff believed that people must work together to learn to take control of their lives, as in the empowerment programs. In all programs, however, peer support was so consistently reported by students and staff as an important element in retention and achievement that it would seem to be to the advantage of any program to actively foster or plan for peer support. Systems of peer support might take varying forms, according to program needs and values. Thus, to foster skills attainment, staff might set up a "buddy system" where peers who wanted help were matched with those who needed help or who shared a similar background or experience. At least part of the time, group classes could be conducted in which everyone helped each other work toward a common goal. To enhance personal development, people with similar problems could be matched for peer tutoring and support. Or, groups could be formed that would share concerns and offer personal and perhaps academic support. Where student empowerment is a main concern, peer groups could be set up to "tell the truth about things" and decide how action might be taken to address group concerns.

As with other supports, use of ancillary supports in the programs studied reflected the values of a particular literacy program. The programs with an empowerment focus saw ancillary support--particularly child care--as essential. Skills-oriented and human development programs, on the other hand, did not regard direct provision of ancillary supports, in the form of child care, food, housing, clothing and transportation, as within their province, although some of these programs referred students to appropriate service agencies. It is worth noting that while much is written about the problems literacy programs have in recruiting and retaining the so-called "hard-to-reach" adult--the person who is often poor, a minority, a woman and/or has very low-level literacy skills--it is not often pointed out that these people have basic physical and logistical needs that must be met before they can enroll in a literacy program. For those literacy programs that seek to work with the hard-to-reach, direct provision of these types of ancillary support may be crucial.

2. Materials

All fifteen programs in the study were involved in some form of assessment and diagnosis, but for human development and empowerment-oriented programs, assessment presented more difficulties than it did for the jobs-skills-focused programs. The problem was in measuring the gains in self-confidence and self-concept that the overwhelming majority of adults surveyed during the study cited as the most important benefit of participating in a literacy program. The study thus pointed up the need to develop ways of assessing these qualitative outcomes of literacy programs. Until such measures are created, it will remain difficult to plan appropriate programs for adult students who have a history of unsuccessful learning experiences and need programs that are directed at creating positive learning environments.

3. Teacher Behavior

A final factor that the study pointed up was the role that teacher attitudes and behavior played in student retention and achievement. While many of the staff and students interviewed said that it was important for teachers to be indigenous to the learner population or to have had similar life experiences so that they could act as role models, the characteristic of teachers that was stressed as most crucial was sensitivity to students' class and cultural background and to their gender. In accordance with this idea, the study found that teachers who held explicit discussions, developed curriculum and selected materials that pertained to the cultural/class context of the learners had, an important positive influence on their success and retention. Regardless of program philosophy or goal, the teacher's attitude of respect for the learner and the learner's background and life experiences, seemed to be the factor most commonly cited by program directors, staff and students as crucial to the outstanding literacy programs included in the study.

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